1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

Formerly every Coorg akka had one or more Pakeya or other low-caste families attached to it as slaves. This was again an hereditary relationship, and between families and not between individuals.

II

In Coorg the agnatically related males form a corporate body enjoying the bulk of the rights in the *okka*. Men, thanks to patrilocality, are assured of continuous residence in the *okka* to which they belong, whereas the women have to leave their natal *okka* on marriage and become members of their conjugal *okka*. The men have a sense of belonging to the *okka* which is absent in all but the oldest women. A girl has to leave her natal *okka* on marriage, and this break in residential continuity is an important factor having legal and other consequences. It takes a long time[1] for her to be accepted into her conjugal *okka*: only when her children are grown up does she have the assured sense of belonging to her conjugal *okka*.

Sons are the comfort and hope of parents. They are the pillars of the *okka*. They are the means by which the *okka* continues to exist, and the continuity of the *okka* is a matter of the most profound concern to the members. Daughters are destined to leave their natal *okkas* and the children that are born to them enrich and perpetuate a different *okka*.

A woman is not a member of an *okka* in the sense a man is, and the legal rights she enjoys are always inferior to a man's. There are compensations, however. A man enjoys his legal rights in one *okka*, whereas a woman enjoys hers in two, her natal and conjugal *okkas*. A girl is maintained in her natal *okka* till her marriage, or throughout her life if she decides to be a spinster. She has the right to return to her natal *okka* if, for example, her husband is impotent, or suffers from an incurable illness, or if her mother-in-law does not treat her properly. She has a right to return to her natal *okka* if she is divorced, assuming of course that she had not been divorced for a serious offence such as adultery with an Untouchable. Should she be guilty of such an offence she is thrown out of caste irrevocably and this means that she loses her rights in both her natal and her conjugal *okkas*.

At marriage her relatives give her gifts of jewellery, clothes, and vessels. These remain her property, and in the event of her divorce she brings them back to her natal *okka*.

[1] Cross-cousin marriage makes it easier for the girl to be absorbed into her conjugal *okka*.

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conjugal *okka* and reverts to her natal *okka*. Such reversion is automatic and not conditional upon the unanimous consent of the members of her natal *okka*. But if a woman has been divorced for a grave offence, her natal *okka* might decide to have nothing to do with her.

4. Children of unsanctioned unions are referred to as *mai kaṇat makka* and they do not enjoy membership of their father's *okka* as legitimate children do. In fact, they are not members of any *okka*. Usually, however, elders bring pressure on the lover's kindred to the grant of membership for the children in the lover's *okka*. But if this is impossible, the children are made members of their mother's natal *okka*.

If the children of an unsanctioned union and their mother are given membership in the lover's *okka* while both the woman and her lover are still alive it is called *bendu* (relative) *parijé*. If, however, the father dies before the children and their mother have been given *sammanda* in his *okka*, then the elders try to see that *sammanda* is given at least before the corpse is disposed of. Such a belated granting of membership is called *kuṭṭa* (funeral pyre) *parijé*. This enables the widow to take part in the funeral rites.

5. A boy from outside is adopted when there are no agnatic descendants in an *okka*. *Sammanda* is performed, giving the boy in question membership of the heirless *okka*.

6. Adoption is not, however, necessary if there is an unmarried girl (or even the widow of a dead member) in the *okka* without an heir. The girl is then married according to the custom of *okka parijé* by which the children of the marriage become members of their mother's natal *okka*. The man himself ceases to be a member of his natal *okka* and becomes instead a member of his wife's natal *okka*.

The institution of *makka* (children) *parijé* is resorted to when it is impossible to find a man willing to leave his natal *okka* and become a member of the heirless *okka*. *Makka parijé* is a sanctioned union between the daughter of the heirless *okka* and a man who, while remaining a member of his natal *okka* and performing his duties by it, also agrees to raise up seed for the heirless *okka*. He usually stays in his natal home and visits his *makka parijé* 'wife' only occasionally. The children of this alliance are members of their mother's *okka*. It is usual for the *makka parijé* 'husband' to have a wife married to him in the normal way and living with him in his natal home. The children of the latter union, unlike the children of

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makka parijé alliance, belong to their father's *okka*. Thus the *makka parijé* husband remains a member of his *natal* okka with a wife living with him, and in addition to this he undertakes to raise up seed for another *okka* which has no male heirs, but has instead only an unmarried girl. He only occasionally visits his *makka parijé* wife. *Makka parijé* has the sanction of custom behind it and it has to be distinguished clearly from extra-marital alliances which are disapproved.

7. Children normally and usually belong to their father's *okka*. Consequently the children of a divorcée, or a widow who wants to marry someone not belonging to her late husband's *okka*, do not follow their mother but continue to remain in their natal home. In certain exceptional circumstances, however, the children of a widow or divorcée are allowed to become members of their mother's natal *okka*. The unanimous consent of the children's natal *okka* as well as that of their mother's natal *okka* is required in order to effect the transfer. If such consent is forthcoming from both sides the children's rights in their natal *okka* are ritually severed, after which they are given *sammanda* in their mother's natal *okka*. The marriage of the widow or divorcée subsequent to the children being given *sammanda* in her natal *okka* does not affect their legal status. They do not follow the mother into her new husband's *okka*. This would again require the unanimous consent of the members of the mother's natal *okka* and her new husband's *okka*.

Rights of membership in an *okka* are an extremely important matter affecting all the members in a variety of ways, social, economic, legal, and ritual. Both the loss as well as the acquisition of a member make a profound difference in the day-to-day interrelations of members. The granting of membership and the loss of membership both become subject to *sammanda* ritual. *Sammanda* dramatically brings home to the parties concerned the implications of granting or withdrawing membership. As *sammanda* is a public occasion, the parties concerned in it will not be able to go back on it at a future date. The ritual that surrounds the giving or withdrawal of *sammanda* rights brings ritual sanctions into operation.

IV

The most frequent form of marriage is 'the marriage of a virgin' (*kanni mangala*), in which the bride leaves her natal *okka* and

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to which people without sons go. Widowhood is the result of sins committed in a previous incarnation. Formerly, a widow's head was shaved, and she was not allowed to remarry. A married woman is regarded as an auspicious person, and articles associated with her, like flowers, vermilion, turmeric powder, glass bangles, and the marriage badge (*tāli*), are regarded as sacred and worshipped on certain occasions. A widow is more or less completely excluded from ritual.

It is necessary to note that the Coorg attitude to the widow is similar to the Brahmin's, though the differentiation between married woman and widow is not as thoroughgoing as among the Brahmin. But the similarity does make possible greater Sanskritization subsequently.

A married woman is a preferred type of person among Coorgs. Motherhood is a preferred condition and formerly the mother of ten children was entitled to have *mangala* performed in her honour.

Other types of preferred persons are the strong man who is also skilled in athletic sports, dancing, and fighting, and the magician who is usually also a doctor. Frequently several preferred traits were combined in the same man, making him doubly or trebly preferred. The preference expresses itself in custom and ritual.

It might be said that the general orientation of Coorg culture is martial. Frequently, customs and rites which appear to be taken over from neighbouring cultures are given a martial twist in Coorg. Competitive games like shooting at a coconut, and fighting for the possession of a coconut, and a collective hunt are introduced into every festival.

The harvest festival and the 'festival of arms' are both very significant in this connexion. It has been pointed out that the most important rites of the harvest festival are the cutting of sheaves, the eating of new rice grains, and the expression of a wish for plenty, but around these central rites are organized dancing and singing, competitive games, and a collective hunt. The incidental elements of the festival take up ten or eleven days while the main elements do not take up more than a day.

The completion of transplantation marks the end of a very arduous period in the cultivation of rice. Thereafter both the men and the oxen are relatively free till the beginning of harvesting. The 'festival of arms' comes at the end of the field season, and at this festival a Coorg resumes his contact with his weapons which

hold duties for 60 days to recover her normal health, and devote herself to her baby. During this period she daily bathes in hot water after having been well rubbed with castor oil before a charcoal fire. The robust health of a Coorg woman is no doubt due to the care taken by them during pregnancy and confinement.

Naming Ceremony

As soon as a Coorg boy is born, a little bow of a castor oil plant stick with an arrow made of a leaf stalk of the same plant is put into his little hands and a gun is fired in the courtyard. He is thus at taking his first breath introduced into the world as a future hunter and warrior. This ceremony is not generally now observed. On the twelfth day after birth, the child is laid into a cradle by the mother or grandmother who gives the name, which in many instances is well sounding and significant. Boys are known by Belliappah, Ponnappa, Mandanna and girls Puvakka, Muthakka and Chinnamma. The Coorg women are very prolific and bear children to the extent of ten or twelve. In cases of necessity a wet-nurse is engaged, but infanticide is not practised.

Family

The Coorg family is of the patriarchal type. It is the domicile of all male relatives and their children belonging to one parental stock. Two or three generations, grandfather, grandmother, their sons, daughters, daughters-in-law and other children numbering from 20 to 60 or even more in some cases, all live and mess together. The labourers who were once their slaves belong to the family and depend on their mistress for food and orders. So long as there is peace and harmony, a Coorg family is a fine example of the patriarchal type. Every domestic affair of importance can be undertaken only with the consent of the senior member. He is expected to look after the principal needs of the family and its members individually and check irregularities of all kinds by sound discipline. The nature and extent of his control may be gathered from the fact that married sons and their wives choose their residence under the paternal roof to avoid the responsibility of a separate establishment. The senior female member is the queen of the household, and holds a corresponding position among the junior members and their wives and daughters. The peace and harmony of the family that once prevailed may be marred by discord, by the harsh treatment of an imperious mother-in-law, by the jealousy and heart-burnings of the married members of the material questions affecting the family income and individual claims. The senior member who is the Karnavan of the family has no easy position under such circumstances. The domestic life under normal circumstances is brightened by the affection of the children for their parents and relatives, and the little ones, of whom there is generally a good number, are in turn great pets of the family. The bearing of the young in the presence of the old is decorous, but the grown-up members are not

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

d. Childbirth.

The birth of a child renders not only the mother of the new born babe, but the whole house unclean and every one who may come in contact with them. This ceremonial uncleanness (Sûtaka) lasts for 7 days, be the babe male or female. The mother is confined for 2 months to the house and not expected to engage in any work, but to recover her strength and to devote herself entirely to her child. This singular custom no doubt greatly contributes to the general good health and vigour of the Coorg women. Daughters are not much valued. They must be brought up and yet are destined to be entirely alienated from the house by their marriage. Boys are the stay of families. As soon as a Coorg boy is born, a little bow of a castor-oil-plant stick with an arrow, made of a leafstalk of the same plant, is put into his little hands, and a gun fired at the same time in the yard. He is thus, at taking his first breath, introduced into the world as a future huntsman and warrior. This ceremony, however, has almost lost its meaning and ceases to be generally observed. On the 12th day after birth, the child is laid into the cradle by the mother or grandmother, who on this occasion gives the name, which in many instances is both well-sounding and significant: thus for boys—Belliappa (silver-father), Ponnappa (gold-father), Mandanna (the brother of the village-green); for girls—Púvakka (flower-sister), Muttakka (pearl-sister), Chinnawa (gold-mother).

The cradle, woven of slit bamboos and cane, and fitted to be hung up for swinging, requires but a little trimming to render it as tidy as any fashionable berceaunette; at all events the little Kodagu smiles and sleeps in it as happy as a prince; and as his mother bends over her darling with overflowing love and happiness and hums the Coorg lullaby:—

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

brother, Ráma immediately created a river, which up to the present day is called Lakshmanatírtha, but it was too late. Ráma afterwards desired to consecrate the spot and ordered Hanuman to bring a Linga from Kási (Benáres) within one hour and a half. During his absence Ráma, fearing that Hanuman would not be back in time, made a Linga himself of river-sand, in which operation he was surprised by Hanuman, who flew into a rage for having troubled himself in vain. He twisted his enormous tail round one of the neighbouring hills, *Hanumanbetta*, and attempted to upset it. Ráma, to comfort the furious monkey-god, assured him that Hanuman's Linga should become even more famous than his own. So the new Linga was set up at Hérumálu and the festive day of its worship precedes that of the Linga at Irpu!

In April and December there are játres to the *Iggudappakuudu* in Padinálknád, where Tulu-Brahmins have a temple and receive the oblations of the Coorgs. It often happens, that a sick Coorg vows his weight in rice to that temple, and, no doubt, the heavier the man the more acceptable and effective the gift!

On the *Hattur hill* or *Kuntada-betta* in Betiednád there is an annual játre in honor of Isvara or Siva who has there a little stone-temple dedicated to him. In 1853 the dilapidated temple was rebuilt at the expense of the Takkas and headmen of Betiednád and their names are written on a stone slab in the temple, which is only 15 feet square, but substantially built with a Linga in front. It stands near the brink of the precipice which is about 500 feet deep and whence a beautiful view is obtained over Kiggatnád. There is also a remarkable stone on the very edge of the precipice about 2 feet broad and 5 feet long, where childless or unmarried people bring offerings of betel leaves, perform worship and turn three times round, believing that this ceremony will insure issue to the barren woman, or a suitable partner to the unmarried youth.